

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 004360

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SUBJECT: SUDAN: NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN CLOSE TO REACHING A FINAL DEAL

REF: UNDERINER-HEGADORN JUNE 1 E-MAIL

Classified by ECPO Counselor John Desrocher for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶](#)11. (C) National Democratic Alliance (NDA) officials confirmed June 7 that negotiations would commence June 12 in Cairo between the NDA leadership and senior Government of Sudan (GOS) officials. The negotiations will cover political and security issues and are scheduled to be completed by June 18, when President Mubarak plans to host Sudanese Vice Presidents Taha and Garang, along with NDA leader Mirghani, for a public signing ceremony in Egypt. NDA lead negotiator General Saeed believes that an NDA-GOS agreement will pave the way for resolution of separate Darfur negotiations and will allow for the return to Sudan by August of senior NDA officials. Nevertheless, Saeed sought USG assistance in pressing both the GOS and the GOS to be fair and flexible in reaching an agreement with the NDA by June [¶](#)18. As for the East and the ongoing conflict between the GOS and Beja opposition groups, Saeed said that separate GOS-Beja talks are possible after the June 18 ceremony, but he predicted Khartoum would seek to quell disturbances in the East by force once it had signed separate agreements with Darfur rebels and the NDA. End summary.

Negotiations Set to Commence

[¶](#)12. (C) Poloff met June 7 with NDA Leadership Council member (and lead negotiator in talks with the GOS) General Abdel Rahman Saeed, and separately the same day with NDA senior negotiator Faruq Abu Issa, to discuss progress on talks with the GOS following the latest Cairo visit by Sudanese Vice President John Garang. Saeed said that Garang had "initiated contact with the NDA" to encourage finalization of pending negotiations which had stalled after a January 29 preliminary agreement had been reached in Cairo between the NDA and the GOS. During meetings on June 2-3, Garang, NDA leader Mirghani, and Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman agreed to convene a "five-plus-five" political committee negotiation in Cairo beginning June 12. Sudanese Vice Presidents Taha and Garang are scheduled to meet Mirghani in Cairo June 15 to review the progress of the talks and to address any sticking-points, Saeed said. If all goes according to schedule, Egyptian President Mubarak is to host a formal, public signing ceremony June 18. A separate "Security Committee" meeting will address the issue of NDA troops being absorbed into the national military, and will conclude an agreement for signature at the June 18 ceremony.

Trust But Verify; NDA Wants Fair Mediation

[¶](#)13. (C) Offering background on the talks between the NDA and the GOS, Saeed criticised Egyptian mediation efforts for contributing to the long delay in bringing the negotiations to a close. When an interim agreement was signed between the NDA and the GOS in Cairo on January 16, Saeed said, the negotiators announced to the media that a final agreement would be signed on February 11 in the presence of President Mubarak. However, when neither Taha nor Garang would commit to convening negotiating teams to implement the January 16 interim agreement (i.e., Section 12 referring to the creation of a "Five-Plus-Five Working Committee"), the NDA told Egypt that it would not sign before the committee was activated and had met. The Egyptians, he said, were angered by what they considered an insult to Mubarak, as a public commitment had been made. Egypt, according to Saeed, responded to the NDA that "negotiations could not be re-opened" and remained aloof regarding plans to convene the final talks. Saeed accused the GOS of bad faith in not carrying out its commitments on "implementation modalities" for the January 16 agreement, and said Egypt was not interested in holding Khartoum's feet to the fire.

[¶](#)14. (C) Citing additional examples of what he termed GOS bad faith, Saeed said that lead GOS negotiator Nafie had told the NDA in January that the composition of the national Constitution Committee would be one-third GOS, one-third SPLM, and one-third opposition groups. By April, however, the GOS position was that

the composition of that committee should reflect the power-sharing percentages described in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (i.e., giving the NDA and opposition groups far less representation and influence). Saeed also accused the GOS of insisting since April that the only way it would engage in final peace talks with the NDA was if the latter committed first to a specific date for final signature of a negotiated deal. Given the NDA's deep distrust of GOS tactics and objectives, however, its leadership refused to make such a commitment without the GOS showing any flexibility on key NDA demands, Saeed said.

The East and the Eritrea Connection

¶5. (C) Asked if the conflict in the East and incipient strains with the Beja were to be addressed in coming negotiations, Saeed said that talks on the East had been delayed indefinitely, but that the Beja Congress and their allies - the Free Lions - were closely watching what their NDA colleagues would achieve in talks with Khartoum. Saeed said that the Beja Congress and Free Lions intended to pursue separate negotiations in the track discussed in the January 16 preliminary agreement with the GOS. (Note: Beja Congress representative Mahmoud Ghabbour arrived at the NDA main office for a senior-level strategy meeting as poloff was departing. During a brief hallway exchange, Ghabbour was scornful of what he called Washington's passivity on the "coming military conflict in the East." He used the opportunity to encourage USG intervention to press Khartoum and Cairo to address Beja concerns fairly. End note.)

¶6. (C) Saeed said that Eritrea had no intention of either releasing control over its "buffer" Beja allies in Eastern Sudan, or making progress in easing bilateral tensions with Khartoum. Despite the recent summit meeting in Tripoli between Presidents Bashir and Afeworki, Saeed said relations between the two states remained fundamentally unchanged. Egypt, Saeed added, could be helpful by urging Khartoum to take Eastern demands for fairness and autonomy seriously and to continue working to ease strains between Khartoum and Asmara. Saeed believed Khartoum's strategy with the East would be to first get the Darfur and NDA talks under control, after which it would send troops to the East to quell the conflict there militarily.

¶7. (U) Khartoum minimize considered.

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